

Books by the Stack



The Thing About Jellyfish by Ali Benjamin

Twelve-year-old Suzy Swanson wades through her intense grief over the loss of her best friend by investigating the rare jellyfish she is convinced was responsible for her friend's death.

Why you'll like it: Heartfelt. Friendship. Humorous. Intense.

About the Author: Ali Benjamin is an award-winning American author. She is best known for her debut novel *The Thing about Jellyfish*, which was a 2015 National Book Award for Young People's Literature finalist. Once upon a time, Ali thought she was going to grow up to be a New York Yankee, or perhaps Spiderman. Instead, Ali lives and writes in rural Massachusetts. She lives with her family and two rescue dogs: a charmingly intense Australian shepherd named Mollie and a gentle, skittish all-American mutt named Charlie Brown.

Questions for Discussion

1. Suzy acknowledges that before the Worst Thing, she used to chatter, what Suzy calls *constant-talking*. Why do you think she does this? Have you ever been in a situation where you chattered? If so, why do you think you did?
2. Do you think Suzy's reason for *not-talking* is exactly what she says it is? Are there other reasons she might have stopped talking? Has there ever been a time when you felt you couldn't speak, or when you refused to talk? What was the result of *not-talking*?
3. Do you think Suzy is a good friend to Franny? Is Franny a good friend to Suzy? What makes someone a good friend? What makes someone a bad one?
4. Is there a difference between teasing and bullying? Where do you think people should draw the line? Do you think Suzy was bullied? Was Franny?
5. Why does Suzy do the Worst Thing? Do you think her actions are justified? Why or why not?
6. Mrs. Turton says that sometimes we learn more from our failures than our successes. What were Suzy's failures? What did she learn from them? Have you ever learned from a failure? If so, when? Even though Suzy didn't make it to Australia, do you think she experienced other successes by the end of the novel?
7. Franny's mother tells Suzy that one of the things Franny always admired about Suzy was that she "never cared what anyone else thought." Is this observation true? Why or why not? Do you find this quality admirable in others? Do you think you have this quality?
8. Suzy's mother tells her that "sometimes things just happen," and that they don't always make sense to us. Do you believe things in your life happen by chance, or by fate?
9. What do you think jellyfish represent in this book? Why do you think the author found jellyfish to be such a strongly symbolic creature that connects to Suzy's story?

10. What do you think of Suzy's hypothesis? Have you ever made a hypothesis that didn't have to do with science – a hypothesis based on the facts of a situation occurring in your own life?

(Questions provided by publisher)



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